

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Approved For Release 2003/02/27 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000900020025-9

**NSC BRIEFING**

**31 October 1957**

**POLITICAL PURGE IN MOSCOW**

I. On 26 October Khrushchev removed Marshal Zhukov from his post as Defense Minister. Khrushchev evidently saw in Zhukov dangerous political rival or at least brake on his ambitions, and chose first opportunity to eliminate his influence. Though events probably did not move as he planned.

A. His chance came when Zhukov left country for 3 weeks, visiting Yugoslavia (9 days) and Albania (9 days). (4 days enroute by cruiser.)

B. Khrushchev was willing (or hard-pressed enough) to take chance that Zhukov's removal would cast shadow across 7 November celebration of 40th anniversary of Bolshevik Revolution. (It has: Tito has already developed health reasons for not attending.)

C. Also possible that intent was to settle matter quietly.

1. Khrushchev may have intended to kick Zhukov upstairs to the premiership or presidency, to use his prestige while cutting off his control of the armed forces.

State Dept. review completed

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2. Events of early afternoon 26 October suggest that this was the plan, but if so Zhukov either resisted or plan fell foul of other broader conflicts requiring unequivocal subordination of the armed forces to the Party. 25X1

II.

- 25X1
- A. [redacted] Zhukov accused of building personality cult; trying to use armed forces for personal power; trying to gain loyalty of armed forces to his own person rather than Party.
- [redacted]

- B. During past few days entire Soviet press, particularly military newspapers, have stressed control of the party over the armed forces. 25X1

1. Pravda on 28 October said it was "because of the leadership of the Communist Party and its Central Committee" that "the Soviet people and their armed forces achieved victory" in World War II.

2. Further strengthening of political education in armed forces called for in 29 October press.

- C. Zhukov is longtime outspoken supporter of right of military leaders to exercise "one-man command" of troops, using political deputies for indoctrination and morale only. Party didn't accept this view.

- D. Infighting on balance of power between Party and officer corps has probably been going on all summer.

- E. Although reported charges ominously similar to those against the late Beria and the secret police, Khrushchev himself publicly said Zhukov would get another job "in keeping with his experience and qualifications." (Cf, Malenkov, Molotov) Zhukov probably will get obscure command, very likely north of Arctic circle.**
- III. Yet there is more than meets eye in this picture of the Party-Army struggle.**
- A. It is likely that domestic problems played major part in this crisis and that once the army-party issue was raised other conflicts in Soviet system showed themselves. Other heads may be involved.**
- B. Khrushchev's sudden "gesture for peace" at the Turkish Embassy on 29 October suggests he may want a softening of the war of nerves in the Middle East, which may have been the price Khrushchev willing to pay temporarily for support from the former Malenkov supporters.**

**IV. These events leave Khrushchev in command of the Party machinery, after it has successively reduced the status of the secret police, the bureaucracy, and the armed forces.**

- A. Administratively he is well along the way to a one-man control of the USSR.**
- B. Yet he has not purged much below the top levels, and he may not always be able to keep ex Beria-Malenkov-Molotov-Zhukovmen in line.**
- C. He is evidently relying on his personal friends in the well-packed Central Committee, but there are many deep-rooted policy conflicts which might split previously loyal politicians.**
- D. The Central Committee has reportedly ended its session, but until a communique is issued, extent of Khrushchev's success is not certain. Ambassador Thompson reports that a public announcement likely on Friday**

25X1